

WALKING IN STONE

Stone offers a variety of opportunities for walkers. Tuesdays SBC Health Walks, Wednesdays U3A walking Group, Thursdays and Sundays Stone Ramblers

WALKING FOR HEALTH INITIATIVE

The WHI is a regular programme of walks that provide a friendly, safe environment to encourage people to walk to improve their health. It is designed to encourage walking for beginners, people recovering from operations, people who have difficulty with longer distances, and those who want a very supportive group to walk with. The Stone group meets on Tuesday at 10.45am at Westbridge Park. All walks have a qualified leader and others in a supporting role. The average number of people attending is 15. Walks are designed to suit the needs of the walkers. The longer walks take less than two hours and the shorter ones between 45mins and 1 hour. All the walks are 'local', most starting at Westbridge Park and others at Trentham, Barlaston, etc.

Can you help? More people are needed to train as leaders. Training takes place in Stafford and takes one day or two evenings. Each walk needs a trained leader and a back marker. With current numbers the commitment to be a volunteer means that you may be asked to accompany a walk twice in two months. Dates are negotiated to suit you. If you would like to help in any capacity, contact 01785 813 604 or 01785 811 227.

U3A

This group meets on Wednesday every other week at 0930 Walton Community Centre. Half day walks are about 4-6 miles and whole day walks 7-10 miles and are done at a leisurely pace. The group requires persons to be members of the U3A, which is for the over 50s retired or semi retired. Contact Stone U3A 01785 814 800 for details of the walking group and Membership of U3A.

EVERYONE CAN LEAD A WALK

The quality of our programme depends on the number of leaders we have.

The U3A and Stone Ramblers are members' organisations and you will feel more involved and have a greater sense of ownership by making an input to their walk programmes; they need a wide variety of walks to keep people interested.

You do not have to invent walks. You can use a walking guidebook for your walk, many are available for our area. If you walk it out beforehand with someone it will help you to feel more confident on the day.

If you feel uncertain about leading a walk on your own contact the Secretary of Stone Ramblers, or U3A's Walk Organiser who will assist you to find a suitable walking partner.



STONE RAMBLERS



STONE GROUP
STAFFORDSHIRE AREA
RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION

MEMBERS HANDBOOK

This document replaces information previously published in every programme, Keep it safe for reference.

A copy of the Ramblers Leader's check list should be carried in your rucksack along with your written Emergency Details .

THE WALKS PROGRAMME

The walks programme is published twice a year covering October - March and April - September.

EVENTS THAT YOU NEED TO BOOK

The Programme gives details of holidays and excursions and events that need to be booked in advance. Places will always be allocated on a first come first served basis and we often need to confirm arrangements well before the actual event. So please help the organiser by booking early because events might be cancelled if numbers do not appear to be viable.

Further details about an event can be obtained from the leader.

Cheques must be payable to 'RA Stone Group' unless otherwise specified.

THE WALKS

Please help the leader to make the day enjoyable and safe.

Post publication changes to the programme and further details are available on www.stoneramblers.com

Walk descriptions.

Each walk entry in the programme has four columns.

- the first column gives the day and the date.
- the second column gives the title of the walk, the departure time from Westbridge Park, and a map reference for the start of the walk.
- the third column indicates the crow-flight distance from Westbridge Park to the start of the walk (A=6, B=12miles etc.), the length of the walk, its degree of difficulty (grade E, L, M, S), and an indication of lunch arrangements. If a Pub stop is indicated this means that lunch would be available. If you wish to eat a picnic you might have to eat it outside the pub. If you use the facilities please purchase something, at least a coffee!
- The fourth column gives contact details of the leader.
- Variations from the normal 9.30a.m. leaving time from Westbridge Park are shown in *italic bold print*.
- Grid references indicate the location of the start of the walk for those who wish to travel there directly.
- If you would like a preview of the area, visit www.geograph.org.uk.

Walks might be changed if the leader is indisposed or the weather is unsuitable, so please tell the leader if you intend to go directly to the start point.

Walk Grades

The walk grade which describes the degree of difficulty is indicated by:

E= Easy. These are walks for anyone who does not have a mobility difficulty or a specific health problem or is seriously unfit. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn.

MOUNTAIN SAFETY ADVICE

Mountain walking in Britain becomes ever more popular and certainly our group is running many more mountain days.

Mountains can also be very dangerous and sometimes unforgiving if things go wrong. Too many accidents occur because people have not taken sensible precautions.

All of our walks entail moving as a group. In addition to promoting friendship (mountain friendships are special because of a shared sense of challenges faced), the group also provides your main safety net in the event of mishaps. Stone Ramblers is very keen that more of its members are able to enjoy the very special thrills of the mountains and would ask members to bear in mind the following principles:

It's not a good idea to tackle our 2500 feet plus mountains if you are not fit enough. If in doubt do things gradually and get fit on lower hills first. Sometimes the leader might advise you not to go if they have doubts. Remember that for most of us it doesn't take very long to gain reasonable fitness.

Come prepared. Bring at least a spare set of clothing, survival bag, emergency food and water, whistle and compass. Your mobile phone might well be useful in an emergency.

It's fun to show off your fitness, but it is a really bad idea to distance yourself from the party by going too far ahead, and sometimes out of sight. Then you create unnecessary concern for the leader and demoralise slower walkers. Most importantly, you might not be noticed if injured, and equally you might not be there to help someone in distress behind you. Have a thought too about quality time. The head down, rush up, rush down approach adds little to your understanding of the mountains. Have a look around. Live and Learn.

Appreciate too that good leaders are not always at the front of the group. They will vary their position, so as to be sensitive to the needs of everyone. Leaders will also have different leadership styles. One thing, however, is essential. If a leader asks you to do something for safety reasons, you must do it. Some things or options might well be discussed and you must speak up if you think there is real danger in an action - but once a decision has been made by the leader you must, for the safety of the group, abide by it.

Any member wishing to undertake any S grade walk must contact the leader at least a few days before the event so that the leader can assess and be confident of the ability of all the party to complete the walk in a safe manner.

Enjoy the mountains. They are a precious asset - but also look after yourself and your companions.

INSURANCE FOR THE LEADER AND FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE PARTY

The Ramblers hold at central level a general public liability policy covering legal liability for injury to persons and damage to property caused by negligent acts. It applies to all groups automatically and you should note that it covers:

- (i) Claims against leaders of Ramblers walks (or Ramblers, or area, or group committees) by a member or members of the party who may have suffered injury on the walk arising out of an alleged negligent act or acts of the leader; or claims by the representatives of the deceased in the event of someone being killed or dying on a walk;
- (ii) Claims against the Ramblers by a landowner whose property has allegedly been damaged by a party of ramblers or by a footpath working party;
- (iii) Claims against organisers of Ramblers social events, indoor meetings, etc, provided the grounds for the claim is negligence on the part of the organisers;
- (iv) The policy will cover use of equipment normally carried in winter hill conditions (ice-axe, crampons), but does not cover mountain climbing involving the use of ropes, etc.
- (v) The policy does not cover the legal liability of persons who are not fully paid-up members of the Ramblers. It is therefore essential that group committees do not allow non-Ramblers members to lead walks. The exception to this is when someone from a recognised organisation is invited to lead a walk, when they should confirm that they are covered by their own organisation's policy. The Ramblers policy is NOT a personal accident policy and individual members are advised, should they wish to be covered, to take out their own policy to cover themselves for personal injury. Group committees should publicise this fact to members. (Details of a policy covering mountaineers and walkers are available from the British Mountaineering Council).

The detail may be updated whenever any change is made to the insurance policy. These changes are all recorded on the Ramblers website. They also contain details on the reporting of accidents and incidents. www.ramblers.org.uk Ramblers members may occasionally be asked to lead a walk for another organisation. They should make sure they are covered by that organisation's own public liability insurance policy.

L= Leisurely. These include some modest hills and possibly some rough ground. They are walks for reasonably fit people with at least a little country walking experience and they are done at a leisurely pace. They might include un-surfaced rural paths and some modest hills. Walking boots or shoes and warm, waterproof clothing are recommended.

M=Moderate. These can include a substantial steep hill or a lot of hills usually less than 600m in total. They are walks for people with country walking experience and a good level of fitness. They might include some steep paths and open country and be at a moderate pace. Walking footwear, generally boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential.

S= Strenuous. These have some challenging hills/mountains and usually involve more than 600m of climbing. They are walks for experienced country walkers with an above average fitness level, and might be at a brisk pace over rough country. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential. **FOR ALL S GRADE WALKS BOOKING WITH THE LEADER AT LEAST A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE WALK IS ESSENTIAL** because the weather might dictate a last-minute change.

Important Advice

These grades are provided as a general guide. If you have any doubt about your fitness for a particular walk please contact the leader in advance. Leaders may decline to take participants who in their opinion are inadequately equipped or unfit.

Bear in mind, the distance of the walk; differences in terrain and the possibility of bad weather, can make a walk more difficult than planned. If you're unsure of your fitness level, try a short and easy walk first: it's much better to find a walk a little too slow and easy than to make yourself miserable and exhausted.

RA Staffordshire Area Walks

Copies of walk programmes for all groups in the Staffordshire Area of the Association can be obtained from Peter Matthews, 1 Barbrook Ave, Longton, Stoke on Trent, ST3 5UG by sending him a stamped addressed envelope. Alternatively you might like to visit www.stoneramblers.com and use the link to the area website.

STONE RAMBLERS CHECKLIST

Shared transport

Travel is usually by private car, non-drivers are always welcome. We suggest that each passenger voluntarily contributes towards the cost of the journey. Currently this contribution is £1 for each 6-mile crow-flight band (see Walk Descriptions) but this is subject to review as fuel prices change.

A=£1, B=£2, C=£3, D=£4, E=£5, etc.

This is a contribution to the running cost of the vehicle, petrol plus some overheads. This guidance applies to all club activities.

What to wear

Remember to wear or bring clothing and footwear which is appropriate for the weather and the terrain you are likely to encounter. Conditions can vary widely between sheltered valleys and windswept moorland. It can be wet and cold even on summer days. Leaders have discretion to decline to take inadequately prepared walkers.

Walk details

Make sure that you are fit enough for the walk. Please telephone the leader if you are unsure of details, such as walk difficulty, timing, lifts, lunch arrangements, etc.

Keep with the group

On walks, keep with the group unless you have agreed otherwise with the leader.

Emergency kit

We advise all walkers to carry, written emergency details, a whistle, first aid kit, torch and spare clothing for emergencies and to keep spare clothing/shoes in the car to change into if necessary when they return. A survival bag and emergency rations should be carried on challenging, S, walks.

Leaders may borrow a club First Aid kit from Becky at Wikijum's shop, High St Stone. Please return it as soon as possible after the walk.

Food

For most walks it is advisable to carry sufficient food and drink for the duration of the walk. If in doubt contact the leader.

Dogs

Dogs may be allowed on walks at the leader's discretion. Please seek the leader's agreement before the day of the walk. Always ensure that your dog can be easily restrained, particularly on farmland.

Care and Safety

You are responsible for your own safety. Should you have an accident on a walk with our group, please inform the Leader who will record details and inform the Group Secretary. All participants in a walking group owe each other a 'duty of care'. All participants should, to the best of their ability, act in such a way so as not to cause, or allow through neglect, foreseeable damage to befall others or their property.

Every care is taken in planning walks, events and work parties, but no responsibility is accepted by the Group, organisers or leaders for any form of accident or liability however caused. Participation in any event is entirely at an individual's own risk. Help the leader to make each event enjoyable.

COSTS

Reducing costs

Every 6 months we send out programmes of our Group activities to members. The information in this handbook and in our programme is available on our website www.stoneramblers.com and can be printed off. This site also gives access to the Staffordshire Area website and the Ramblers website that list more walks available to all members.

Not all our members walk with our Group, but thankfully they support the work of Ramblers.

If you do not need a paper copy of the programme let the Group Programme Secretary know. This will save us money and effort.

Many other websites give access to walk descriptions, maps and lists of available guide books. These include:-

www.walkinginstaffs.co.uk, www.go4awalk.com, www.walkingpages.co.uk, www.thisisstaffordshire.co.uk, www.walkingworld.com

Event finances

All events organised by Group Members should be self-financing. (i.e. paid for by those participating)

Event leaders should ensure participants are fully aware of all costs at the time of booking. In the unlikely event that a leader is not sure about covering costs, the leader should clear any possible expenses with the treasurer and, if necessary, the Group Committee, at an early stage.

The Group Treasurer is responsible for authorising normal expenses but will refer any abnormal costs to the committee for approval. The finances of all events, other than normal weekly walks, must go through the club accounts unless agreed otherwise by the Group Treasurer.

WALK LEADERS' CHECK LIST

(This advice is a summary of the advice on the Ramblers Association Walk Leader's Check List card)

Choose the Route

- ◆ Estimate the length, height gain, type of terrain, season, strength of party for the grade.
- ◆ Use map or guide book, research points of interest, parking, breaks, lunch, bad-weather alternatives and escape routes.

Recce

- ◆ Preferably prewalk the route together with your backmarker, perhaps write a route card including timings.
- ◆ Check timings and assess risks including stiles.
- ◆ Locate possible toilets.

Day Before

- ◆ Check weather forecasts, personal gear, warn the pub, check public transport.

On the Day

- ◆ Carry a copy of 'Ramblers Action at an incident card' supplied with this hand book
- ◆ Keep in contact with back marker, set appropriate pace, watch-out for stragglers.
- ◆ Concentrate on navigation and check timings as you progress.
- ◆ Manage regrouping, countryside impact.
- ◆ Be alert to potential problems, hazards, traffic, road walking
- ◆ Involve others as necessary.

- ◆ **Enjoy the Walk**

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Footpath Secretaries and Guardians

We are always looking for people who would like to help in these roles which affect the quality of our walking experience. If you are interested in helping, please contact the club Footpath Secretary who will explain what could be involved and where we need help.

Footpath Maintenance

If you do not choose to walk with us it does not prevent you getting involved with footpath maintenance. It does mean that you can contribute to the maintenance of the essential footpath network which you use. Contact a committee member for details of how you can help by joining our working parties.

Maps

Why not bring your own map?

They are especially useful if you need to meet the leader at the starting point, and will enhance your appreciation of the walk and might help in an emergency.

Ordnance Survey Explorer maps, 243,244,258,259,OL24 will be useful to start with. They provide easy-to-follow detail and are ideal for planning walks.

OS Explorers are the maps quoted for Grid References in the programme.

Maps can be obtained at 15% discount and post free from www.mapkiosk.com or Mapkiosk, 160 Marston Rd, Stafford, ST16 3PU, 01785 241010. Quote Stone Ramblers.

Committee

You are always welcome to attend any of our committee meetings which are held 3 or 4 times a year. Please contact the Group Secretary for details of dates.

Any committee member would be happy to receive your ideas for the future and comments on our current programmes. We are always looking for new ideas and volunteers to help us.

Emails and Group Website

Let us have your Email address. It will help rapid, cheap communication, and make sure you are up to date with the programme.

You can contact Group Officers through the links on the Group website.

This also contains the latest programme information.

www.stoneramblers.com

WALK LEADERS' GUIDANCE NOTES

1. As a Group we wish to create and encourage a good social atmosphere as well as have "good walks". At the start of your walk please give a general description of the proposed route and stops, and what might be expected in terms of hills, mud, animals, etc. Walkers should be made to feel welcome.
2. If you are not present at the meeting place (normally Westbridge Park) you must make arrangements for walkers to be guided to the actual start of the walk. This has caused problems in the past.
3. It would be helpful to the organisation of Stone Ramblers if you could identify any "new walkers" and take their names and addresses. These should be passed on to the Group Membership Secretary for information.
4. You are responsible for trying to reduce the number of cars proceeding to and parking at the actual start by encouraging sharing. Please also encourage respect of the parking area. Ask for donations if you use a village hall car park.
5. You are in charge and the walk is your responsibility. You should be familiar with the route. It would be advantageous to have walked the route recently.
6. Individuals are responsible for their own behaviour. If walkers behave inappropriately please speak to them and if necessary draw this to the attention of the Chairman or one of the Group Committee Members
7. Individuals are responsible for their own safety. You should however draw attention to potential hazards or unsafe behaviour. Without appearing officious, make sure that all party members are suitably equipped to cope with terrain and prevailing weather conditions. It might also be pertinent to discuss fitness for the walk. These will have to be subjective judgements, but in extreme circumstances you would be justified in advising someone not to come if lack of proper equipment or fitness for the walk could put that person at risk, or might endanger the safety of others.

8. Every attempt should be made to keep the group close together especially on mountains and difficult terrain. The leader should always be aware where the back of the group is situated and be able to contact those at the back. With large groups a back marker will help to look after slower walkers and to close gates. Preferably they should be familiar with the proposed route. They should carry a whistle to alert the leader of emergencies.
(1 long blast slow down, 2 long blasts emergency)

9. An emergency/accident on the walk must take priority over all other activities. Consult the Ramblers Leaders check list for advice. An Emergency Kit containing a First Aid Kit for minor emergencies is kept at Wikijum's, High St. Stone for you to borrow if you don't normally carry one. A telephone is very useful in case of accidents. Report all accidents and significant incidents to the Group Secretary.

10. In the case of inclement weather you should, in consultation with the group, decide whether to shorten the walk, turn back, etc. It is better to be safe than sorry.

11. If you need to use a road with no pavement or verge, the group should walk in single file on the right-hand-side with someone on the left-hand-side on blind corners.

12. On longer walks, the lunch halt is very important. If possible, should the weather be bad, try to find a place with shelter. If you intend to use a public house, please check that it can accommodate your party and can provide food and/or allow us to consume our own. Pub stops will be indicated in the programme.

13. Please report significant problems with footpaths to the Group Footpath Secretary of Stone Ramblers so that appropriate action can be taken.

More detailed guidance

Any member of the Stone Ramblers Committee would be happy to help. Alternatively, Ramblers' produce a fact sheet, 'Advice and Information for Leaders of Rambles'. This gives detailed advice on every aspect of planning, reconnoitre, programme information, what to do on the walk, navigation, training, first aid, insurance and other Ramblers fact sheets. These are available on the Ramblers website. www.ramblers.org.uk